

Message Text

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ACTION CPR-01

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FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7813

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIBREVILLE 1003

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDIP PFOR GB

SUBJECT: AGREEMENT FOR GOG AMBASSADOR

REF: LIBREVILLE 905

1. TWICE-DEFERRED LUNCHEON WITH AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE RENE KOMBILA FINALLY TOOK PLACE MAY 22, WITH DCM AND FONMIN DIRECTOR OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS RAYMOND TCHICAYA ALSO PRESENT.

2. OUR JOINT IMPRESSION OF KOMBILA WAS GENERALLY FAVORABLE. THOUGH YAOUNDE 1725 IS CERTAINLY ACCURATE IN NOTING THAT HE IS NOT AN "INTELLECTUAL HEAVYWEIGHT", IT EMERGED IN COURSE OUR CONVERSATION THAT HIS POST IN BATA WAS INDEED SOMETHING MORE THAN NORMAL CONSULATE GENERAL. KOMBILA HIMSELF NOTED THAT HE HAD "SPECIAL MISSION" IN BATA, AND REPORTED THAT HE RETURNED TO LIBREVILLE MONTHLY TO REPORT ON CURRENT EVENTS IN EG. (VISITS ALSO GAVE HIM OPPORTUNITY TO SEE HIS FAMILY, WHICH FOR FINAL FOUR YEARS OF HIS EXTENDED TOUR REMAINED BEHIND IN GABON.) THUS, HE PRESUMABLY ENJOYS CONFIDENCE OF BONGO, CONCLUSION SUPPORTED BOTH BY HIS WILLINGNESS USE FULL AUTHORITY AVAILABLE TO HIM IN VISA-ISSUANCE AND BY FACT HE WAS INITIALLY CONSIDERED FOR POLITICALLY-SENSITIVE POST IN KINSHASA.

3. LUNCHEON ALSO PRODUCED MORE ACCURATE INFORMATION ON KOMBILA'S FAMILY SITUATION THAN PREVIOUSLY AVAILABLE. HE HAS SEVEN CHILDREN RATHER THAN THREE ORIGINALLY REPORTED, BUT CURRENTLY PLANS TAKE ONLY THREE YOUNGEST (3 YEARS, 2 YEARS AND 6 MONTHS) WITH HIM TO
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WASHINGTON. FROM HIS EXPRESSED INTEREST IN FRENCH-LANGUAGE SCHOOLS

IN WASHINGTON AREA, HOWEVER, HE MAY BE PLANNING AHEAD TOWARD
EVENTUALLY BRINGING ENTIRE FAMILY TO HIS NEW POST.

4. THUS, ON BALANCE, WE EMERGED FROM LUNCHEON ENCOURAGED.
KOMBILA WILL NOT BE BRIGHTEST STAR IN WASHINGTON GALAXY OF
AFRICAN AMBASSADORS, BUT SHOULD NONETHELESS REPRESENT IMPROVE-
MENT OVER INCUMBENT IF ONLY BY VIRTUE OF HIS GREATER SELF-
CONFIDENCE AND SEEMING WILLINGNESS TO PROVIDE HIS EMBASSY WITH
SENSE OF DIRECTION WHICH HAS HERETOFORE BEEN LACKING.

5. ASKED WHEN HE EXPECTED ARRIVE IN WASHINGTON, KOMBLWA INDIC-
ATED HE WAS READY TO LEAVE AND WAS MERELY AWAITING AGREEMENT.
GOG, HE ADDED, ALREADY HAS VENEZUELAN AGREEMENT FOR MAVOUNGOU,
SO SHIFT CAN TAKE PLACE AS SOON AS USG AGREEMENT OBTAINED.

6. COMMENT: SINCE PRESIDENT ALMOST CERTAIN TO RAIS QUESTION
WHEN I SEE HIM IN NEXT FEW DAYS, WOULD APPRECIATE BEST CURRENT
ESTIMATE ON TIMING FOR AGREEMENT AND ANY HELP DEPARTMENT CAN
OFFER IN SPEEDING PROCESS. STEIGMAN

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